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HABS No. MO-1863

R.A. Long House
(Corinthian Hall)(Kansas City Museum of History and Science)
3218 Gladstone Boulevard
Kansas City
Jackson County
Missouri

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

R.A. LONG HOUSE HABS No. MO-1863
(Corinthian Hall) (Kansas City Museum of History and Science)

Location: 3218 Gladstone Boulevard, Kansas City, Jackson County,
Missouri

Present Owner and
Occupant: Kansas City Museum of History and Science

Present Use: Museum

Significance: Building is architecturally significant as a particularly grand local example of a Beaux-Arts residence. Its original owner, R.A. Long, symbolized the late-nineteenth century ideal of coming from a poor background and rising to wealth and prestige. Long also voiced early view on forest conservation.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Construction began in February, 1909, and ended in December, 1910.
2. Architect: Henry Ford Hoit, FAIA
3. Original owner: R.A. Long
4. Contractor: George W. Higgins, General Contractor
5. Alterations and additions: Alterations to the main house fall primarily under the category of original amenities lost either through neglect or deterioration. An original pipe organ has been removed at some unspecified time. In some rooms, false ceilings have been added.

Other structures on the estate have been even further modified or removed. Of the greenhouse, only the foundations remain. What was originally a conservatory now serves as the platform for the Museum's planetarium. During the late 1950's, the carriage house and stables were converted to a "Hall of Natural History" and maintenance shop. The north/south portion of a colonnaded pergola was removed sometime in the 1960's. The gate house's exterior has been changed only by the addition of a porch with a red asphalt roof in 1937.

Historical Context:

Robert Alexander Long (1850-1934) lived up to the Horatio Alger myth of the late-nineteenth century. Born to a family of modest means on a farm in Shelby County, Kentucky, Long had become a nationally prominent figure in the lumber industry by the turn of the century. He owned vast holdings of forested land in the state of Washington and a large network of sawmills and lumber yards throughout the south and southwest. Aside from his business interests, Long also played an important role in Kansas City as a civic leader and philanthropist, as well as promoting conservation of national resources. In 1908 Long delivered an address on forest conservation at the White House, having been selected as one of four speakers by President Theodore Roosevelt.

Architecturally, the R.A. Long house typifies one version of the upper-income ideal at the turn of the century. The house was in fact the city residence of the Long family; they owned a country estate in Lee's Summit, Missouri. Similar to many cities at the time, Kansas City planners had begun to use parks as a way of segregating the city into zones based on the income of inhabitants. Kessler Park, which lies to the west of the Long property, served not only to keep out "undesirable" development, but also assured an unobstructed view of wooded hills from the already-large site of the Long house.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: In terms of its decorative detail, Corinthian Hall is a textbook example of the Beaux-Arts mansion in the grand style. Quoins, elaborate window-surrounds, and the oval dormers all are typical of this style, as is the columned entrance.
2. Condition of fabric: good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 105 feet long by 65 feet wide, with a service wing of 41 feet long by 51 feet wide.
2. Walls: Facade of superstructure is buff Bedford limestone laid in ashlar

3. Structural system: reinforced concrete with brick and terra cotta partitions
4. Porches: Northeast facade contains monumental entrance porch; west side has one-story porch with overhanging metal canopy to function as a porte-cochere. On the north facade is a one-story portico.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: South (main) front contains central doorway underneath portico. The entrance doors are made of bronze. On either side running across the facade are three long window/doorways which lead to the terrace in front of the house. East facade has a doorway leading to garden steps; north facade also contains a doorway, sheltered by a wrought-iron balcony. The west facade contains a porte-cochere and entrance to the house. This is shielded by a glass and bronze canopy.
6. Decorative features and trim: Carved-stone cartouches decorate the third-floor-level facade. The house has a detailed stone cornice, as well as carved window surrounds on the first and second floors. On the south facade are decorated urns on either side of the entrance steps.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Shallow hip roof covered with red tile. Flashings and ornament, including guttering and downspouts, as well as roof brackets, are copper.
 - b. Cornice: Made of cut stone.
 - c. Dormers: Oval-shaped, made of cut stone.

C. Description of Interior:

The house contains roughly seventy rooms. Most have been considerably changed for the house's present use as a museum. The entrance hall, measuring 26 by 50 feet, boasts a marble floor and a white marble staircase with a bronze balustrade. William Baumgartner & Company of New York City decorated the original interiors. Rooms were a progression of "period pieces," including an Adamesque breakfast room, Francis I living room, Louis XIV dining room, Louis XVI Grand Salon, an Elizabethan-style library, Jacobean sitting room, and French Provincial bedrooms.

In terms of amusements, the house also once contained a large pipe organ, whose console was located on the landing of the grand staircase. The basement contained a bowling alley and billiard room.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south on a large lot; a stone and iron fence, complete with elaborately-detailed entry gates, surrounds the property. The fence averages seven feet in height, with stone pillars set at about thirty feet intervals. Twelve-foot-high pillars topped by lanterns flank the main entry gates (excluding more modest service gates).
2. Outbuildings: Although the architecture of the outbuildings is more restrained than that of the main house, the same materials are used (limestone facing, tile roofs, and copper detailing).
 - a. Carriage House: The most elaborate of the outbuildings, the carriage house measures 40 by 121 feet and faces south. On the second story were quarters for grooms and servants. The first floor had ten large stalls, five on either side of the two-story central section.
 - b. Conservatory: At the west end of the colonnade is a rectangular one-story building. The bays in its walls and the domed roof originally contained glazing.
 - c. Greenhouse: It was approximately the same size as the conservatory, located at the east end of the colonnade. Only the foundations remain.
 - d. Colonnaded pergola: The pergola originally extended east and west, with the greenhouse at the east end and the conservatory at the west end. The colonnade extended to the south beginning at its center section and ending at the north door of the carriage house. This was dismantled sometime in the 1960's.
 - e. Gate house: remains unaltered on exterior except for the addition of a porch with a red, asphalt-tiled roof in 1937.

PART III. SOURCE OF INFORMATION

National Register of Historic Places nomination form, "Long, R.A., House," compiled by Lenore K. Bradley, May, 1980.

Prepared by: Robert Buerglener
HABS, August, 1988

ADDENDUM TO
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